



UPDATE

Fall 1995

Volume 1 Number 9

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological Projects, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048, (212) 432-5707, for the purpose of providing current information on New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context.

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FIHANKRA TOUR '95: REUNITING THE DIVIDED HOUSE

Ama Badu Boakyewa and
Deborah Wright

On a visit whose importance has yet to be fully realized, a Royal delegation of chiefs from Ghana, West Africa travelled to the United States on a "Tour of Fihankra." Led by Nana Odeneho Oduro Numapau II, President of the National House of Chiefs, the tour was one of atonement and reunification based on the historical reality that some of the ancestral traditional rulers helped sustain the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.



Members of the National House of Chiefs of Ghana watch as Nii Adote Mofatt pours a libation for the ancestors of the African Burial Ground.

Photo credit: Doville C. Nelson, Jr.

Centuries of outsider exploitation of Africa's land and people involved invasions, which resulted in the forced exportation of millions of Africans into slavery. Delegation member Nana Kwadwo Akpan, an African American residing in Ghana, expressed this on the matter. "The skills and man power of Africa and the mineral resources from its lands were used to build America and Europe into what they have now become — international superpowers. Conversely, Africa was stripped of its greatest asset, its people, and thus could not develop to its natural capacity. Indeed, it can be accurately stated that since the slave trade began, few things seem to have gone right for Africa..." Nana Akpan's words are borne out by the fact that once the slave trade built up momentum, some ancestral rulers accepted slavery as a business, and were ignorant to the grim fate awaiting those Africans sold to outsiders.

And so in 1994, Ghanaian chiefs met, and formed the Ancestral and Stools and Skins Purification Committee (ASSPC). This committee was responsible for initiating a seven-phase program with the theme, "Fihankra: Reuniting the Divided House." Phase I involved the performance of rites labeled "The Purification."

The matter of atonement was initiated by Ghanaians who regularly witness African Americans in Ghana visiting the slave castles.

In This Issue...



Howard University Report.....	3
African American Beginnings Pt. IV	5
Fall Calendar of Events.....	7
Community Voices.....	10
Foley Square Report.....	11
The Chrystie St. Cemetery.....	12
Children's Corner.....	14
Book Review Section.....	16

and more!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Mutual Appreciation

This is to announce my safe arrival in Ghana. Please accept my sincere thanks for the company, gift and the wonderful reception accorded me during our **Finhankra Tour** with chiefs from Ghana. May God and all our Ancestral fathers reward you abundantly. I am looking forward to the day you will also be in Ghana. God Bless You.

Sincerely yours,
Mama Adokuwa-Asigble IV

Ed. Note: The entire staff of OPEI would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to the National House of Chiefs for the historically significant Fihankra tour. We hope to continue to work with you in honoring our African ancestors.

Children's Thoughts

When our class went to visit the Office of Public Education & Interpretation of the African Burial Ground, we saw the film entitled "Unearthing the Slave Trade." I saw what the slave trade was like in New York and what the slaves actually did. I think it was cruel and terrible ...I thought it was interesting to see the archaeologists working on skeletons and bones.

It was sad to see all of the skeletons. I also have one question: What are you going to do with the skeletons when the people at Howard University finish working with them? I thank you again for all this and hope you continue to teach children and adults about the African Burial Ground.

Jennifer Park

Ed. Note: By the year 2000 the human remains will be returned to the New York City African Burial Ground for reburial.

The trip was great, you told us lots of things. I think the people suffer[ed] when they were slaves. I think it was interesting when you found some of the bodies. My reaction when I saw the film, I thought it was kind of sad. Especially when lots of babies died. So thank you for showing us all of those things...

Andres McReno

We here at the Mind-Builders Folk Arts Program would like to thank you for taking your time out to educate us about the African Burial Ground. It is very interesting to know that while we walked downtown in Manhattan, we may have been walking over someone's grave.

Thanks Again,
Mind-Builders
Folk Arts Interns

I like that you took the time to teach us about our own culture. I [enjoyed] the pictures, bones, African people, and taking us to the African Burial Ground.

Yours truly,
Vanessa Luna
Class 5-304

Make A Difference

More than half a million volunteers on the fourth annual Make A Difference Day gave money, time and goods for their causes, but most of all they gave of themselves. They gave their voices in song for shut-ins, and their strength for moving heavy furniture. They painted schools, libraries, community centers and other public facilities. They gave their handiwork (quilts and wheelchair lap robes) and their energy to mobilize others to join in making a difference...We hope that the spirit that moved half a million people to do good on Make A Difference Day will inspire even more on the fifth annual event next October 28. Information about the day appears in most issues of USA Weekend and is available by calling The Points of Light Foundation's Make A Difference Day hot line, 1-800-416-3824.

Marcia Bullard	Richard Schubert
Editor,	President and CEO
USA WEEKEND	The Points of Light Foundation

Ed. note: On October 28th, OPEI hosted a Volunteer Seminar with 15 to 20 new recruits. See page 8 for more details on becoming an OPEI volunteer

Staying Informed

I recently attended the "African Burial Ground" lecture at the Organization of American Historians convention in Washington, DC. After an extremely informative and useful lecture by Michael Blakey and others involved in the project, I was told that your office distributes informational packages. I would really appreciate one of the packets and to be included on your mailing list. I am a historian currently working with the Curator of African Ethnology at the Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian) and I am very interested in keeping abreast of your findings and progress. Your project is infinitely fascinating and, I'm sure, just as demanding... I can safely say that the African Burial Ground project is probably the most significant development of the Atlantic world in a very long time. Thank you for all your efforts.

Jeremy G. Prestholdt

Ed. note: Our office does indeed distribute free literature to the public and offers no cost slide presentations and films at our site or yours! Please call for details.

Correction: The article "OPEI Celebrates Third Anniversary!" inadvertently gave the birth year of the late Noel Pointer Sr. as 1945. The date should have appeared as December 26, 1954.

OPEI welcomes letters but due to limited space reserves the right to edit for length and clarity.

NOTES FROM THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY LABORATORY

Recent Research Findings Concerning the African Burial Ground Population.

*Mark E. Mack, Laboratory
Director, and M. Cassandra
Hill, Osteologist, N.Y. African
Burial Ground Project at
Howard University*

Introduction

The biological anthropology research efforts continue at a steady pace at Howard University. Currently, 320 out of the approximately 400 ancestral remains have been cleaned, and anthropometric data taken.

Although statistical analysis and frequency data cannot be reported until all skeletal remains are processed, this does not prevent our research team from sharing some of our interesting recent skeletal and archaeological findings with you, the concerned public.

Skeletal Findings

Throughout the course of skeletal reconstruction and analysis, several different types of fractures of the vertebrae (usually 24 bones which comprise the spinal column) have been identified; each is associated with different work activities, and each is indicative of extreme

load-bearing, bio-mechanical stress.

Four distinct fracture types have been identified. First of all, we found a "**Jefferson**" fracture of the first cervical (neck) vertebra (see Fig.1) belonging to a man in his early 30's (Burial 6). This type of fracture is associated with axial loading; applying

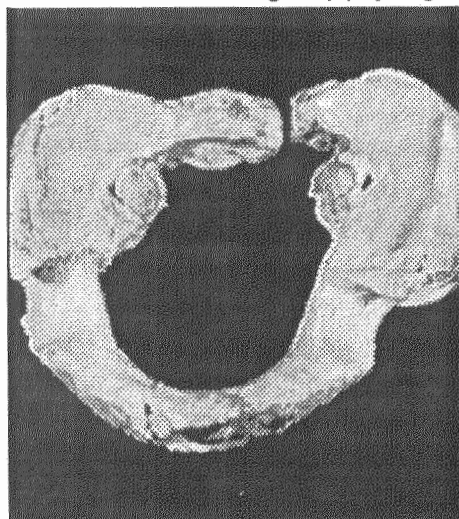


Fig. 1 Jefferson Fracture
Photo credit: Otto Jerome Edwards

weight directly to the top of the head and spinal column, as many people of African descent would normally carry loads. In this case the man was forced to carry loads that were too heavy for him to manage.

A second type of fracture, spondylolysis, has been found in an elderly man (Burial 37), an adult woman

(Burial 107), and an adult male in his late 20's (Burial 200). **Spondylolysis** is a fracture of the spinous process of the most distal fifth lumbar vertebra (lower back). It is associated with axial loading and with excessive forward bending.

The third type of spinal fracture found is a **split fracture** of the spinous process of the twelfth thoracic vertebra (middle - lower back). A woman in her mid to late thirties who died in childbirth (Burial 12) and a man who died in his mid 30's and was buried with the Sankofa symbol on his coffin lid (Burial 101) exhibit these fractures. Although this type of fracture is not associated with a specific type of activity, it is interesting to note that it is found in both a man and a woman, indicating that they were engaged in similar, physically stressful work activities; some cases question the existence of a sexual division of labor, such as similarities in spinal fractures and enthesopathies (fragments torn away from bone due to muscle tears).

Finally, the fourth type of spinal fracture is characterized by a break in the spinous process of the eighth

thoracic vertebra. A man in his early 40's (Burial 299) was afflicted with this fracture; it has been associated with throwing heavy loads over the shoulder, commonly referred to as "**clay shoveler's fracture.**" One can only imagine what type of work this man was forced to perform, perhaps working at one of the numerous local pottery kilns, or maybe laboring in road or street construction.

Other pathologies have been uncovered recently. Two individuals have been identified with lesions associated with soft tissue masses, i.e. probable tumors. A man in his early 30's (Burial 270) has a small, round lesion which penetrates the upper portion of the left ilium (hip). A woman in her mid 30's (Burial 313) has a large, rounded lesion of the right knee, probably the result of a fibrous tumor. The lesions in both individual's have smooth, well-defined borders with no evidence of inflammation or spread (metastasis) to other parts of the body.

This suggests that the lesions were benign and not malignant, although they probably were a source of discomfort.

Archaeological Findings

After excavating the skeletal material from the surrounding soil matrices we have uncovered artifacts associated with clothing; these include a jacketed bead found with an adult woman (Burial 107) and a lead alloyed button covered with leather found with an elderly man (Burial 32). Radiographic (X-ray) analysis of numerous coffin handles have uncovered insights into our ancestors' burial practices. The back plates

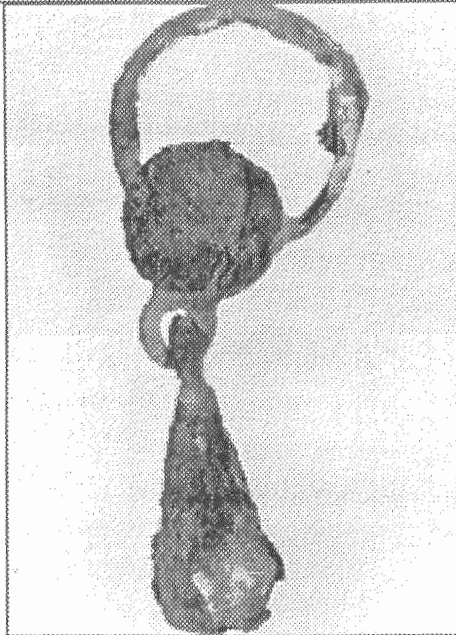


Fig. 2. Recovered pendant
Photo credit: Otto Jerome Edwards

were made of wrought iron and characterized by our conservators as having numerous hammer marks. A man's coffin (Burial 178) had six sturdy coffin handles, two on each side, one at the head and one at the foot of the coffin, which were probably locally made by a blacksmith. Two cut out back-to-back arrow motifs are on each escutcheon plate, indicating that although the coffin handles were decorative, the sturdiness of the handles leads one to suspect they were functional as well.

The most exciting artifact uncovered recently is a pendant worn in death around the neck of a five year old child. The pendant can be described as a cylindrical ring with a metal ball piercing it (Fig. 2).

Organic material was attached to the ring, suggesting that the pendant was secured around the child's neck by leather or rawhide. The ball has been cast and has a high silver content. A single metal link is attached

beneath the ball, and attached to the link is a teardrop-shaped piece of decorative metal. Conservator Gary McGowan has suggested that although the pendant could have been made locally, its style is not reminiscent of European or colonial stylistic manufacture of which he is aware.

In conclusion, our research efforts are continuing and other exciting skeletal and archaeological findings are hoped for. We have thus far reconstructed and collected data from 320 skeletal remains. However, the most important discoveries are ahead when, after this initial phase of cleaning, reconstruction and recordation of the aggregate data will be in hand and demographic and pathological analysis will be completed. Then we will be able to ascertain what percentage of the population is male or female or how many people were afflicted with pathologies associated with overwork, to name just a few items of interest that will aid in the reconstruction of our African ancestors' lives.

Special Tours of the New York African Burial Ground Project at Howard University's Biological-Anthropology Laboratory will be scheduled for members of the New York descendant community who may be in Washington during the American Anthropological Association's Symposium "**The Archaeology of Enslavement**" Friday and Saturday, Nov. 17th & 18th, 1995 at the Hilton Towers, Washington, D.C. The Friday tour is scheduled for 7:00 - 9:00pm. The Saturday tour will take place after Session III of the Symposium, at 5:00pm. For information call: 212.432.5707 in New York or 202.806.5252 in Washington.

AFRICAN AMERICAN BEGINNINGS PART IV

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson

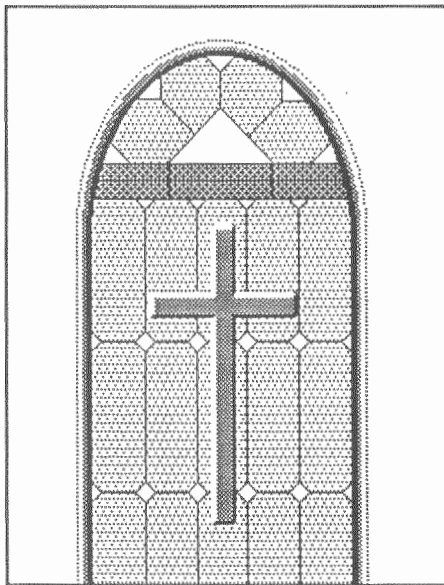
Note: This article was originally a three part article published by the author in Through Black Eyes: Revisioning New York History (1991-1992). However, for UPDATE, this article is being expanded to a six part article which will conclude in the Spring 1996 issue.

The birth of the African American church in New York City marked the inception of the organized formation of a parallel African American society which addressed the needs of an economically and socially segregated and discriminated against segment of the larger society. This birth was also endorsed and legitimized by the white elders of the John Street Methodist Church. However, a strong sense of community existed among African Americans prior to the official organization of this pivotal institution. Curry notes:

American blacks had first to perceive the existence of their ethnic community and then to establish and foster the black church as an instrument of further community development. In this involved and complicated process, urban blacks took the leading role (1981:174).

The African American members of the John Street Methodist Church who helped to form Mother Zion A.M.E. Church maintained membership at the John Street

Church. In 1801 this African American congregation laid the cornerstone for Mother Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), the first African American Church established in New York City. (Brown 1992, Curry 1981, Greenleaf 1850, Hodges 1989). This group was headed by Peter Williams, an African American sexton of the church. Williams was formerly enslaved, and had been purchased by the church in 1783.



James Aymar, William's former master, a tobacconist, sold Williams to the Trustees of the John Street Church. Williams also became a tobacconist and who bought his freedom from the church in 1785.

The notion of maintaining a dual membership in the white church for the African American founders of Mother Zion illustrated a need to maintain ties with the white church, although they were largely dissatisfied with their second class treatment in white churches

(Curry 1981; Southern 1977). Curry notes:

Black religious leaders did not rush to sever their ties with the white controlled churches and denominations for they had a lively appreciation of the difficulties—especially financial difficulties inherent in establishing separate organizations (1981:175).

The African American church in America in general and in New York in particular, provided a means for free people of color to gain respectability and unity as a legitimate organization (Curry 1981; Low and Clift 1981; Ottley and Weatherby 1967)

Out of the African American churches in New York, as in other northern cities such as Philadelphia, schools, literary societies, musical societies and beneficial and benevolent societies were formed (Curry 1981; Southern 1977).

A discussion of musical practices in the early African American churches in New York City and Philadelphia illustrates the patterning of African American churches after white-run religious institutions. Eileen Southern (1977) traces a pattern that suggests that African Americans in forming their own churches sought to emulate as much as possible white churches in their musical practices in New York's and Philadelphia's earliest churches. Southern notes:

The music performed in black churches for the formal services consisted of psalms, hymns, and anthems...The singing of anthems



for church services called for trained choral groups who could read music... Interestingly, worshippers in the early African American churches experienced the same controversies over the introduction into the church of choral singing and reading music as white Protestant churches had a century earlier. The African American church, like the white churches of the period, held sacred music concerts, where compositions by Handel and Mozart were favorites, performed by both African Americans and white musicians(1977:64)

A notice in Freedom's Journal, the first African American newspaper in the United States, advertised that the African Harmonic Society would present its second sacred music concert at the first African Presbyterian Church on April 6, 1827.

The gospel spiritual associated today with African American religious music was much protested by members of early African American churches in New York. African American churches were often advised by members of associated white churches who generally viewed "spiritual songs" according to one advisor, Daniel Payne, as "cornfield ditties" and camp meetings, where these songs might be sung during "bush meetings" (Southern 1977:65).

Movement of the head and "dancing" to religious spirituals was forbidden in early New York African American churches. According to Southern, the spirituals and their tradition of hand clapping and singing and dancing alternately "represents the

most obvious example of the influence of African traditions on the early African American church. ...The 'spiritual songs' represent, of course, another example of African influence, for despite the fact that the text consisted of scraps of Protestant hymns and prayers joined together by refrains and choruses, there was little resemblance between the resultant spiritual and the original hymn source".

Camp meetings, a part of the religious revival movement in America between 1780 - 1830, were the only religious service, in African American churches where this type of song was not only allowed, but according to Southern, encouraged. Southern elaborates:

Camp meetings lasted from four to six days, or even a week, and attendance was frequently as high as four or five thousand. At the beginning of the century, African Americans attended white organized camp meetings, from the 1830's on however, it appears that whites attended meetings sponsored by African Americans (1977:74).

Southern concludes that some of the same African American musicians who sang the music of Handel or Mozart may well have also sang the "spirituals" of the camp meetings. She summarizes: "This would have been squarely in the African traditions which allows for no sharp line of distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the profane, except where the function of the music is involved" (1977:74).

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FALL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Compiled by Ama Badu Boakyewa
and Emilyn L. Brown

BOOK DISCUSSION AND SIGNING

**Nkiru Bookstore, 76 St. Marks Pl.,
Bklyn, NY, 718.783.6306**
Hosts a book reading by Susan Taylor!
**Thurs., Dec. 14, 6-8PM, Akwaaba
Mansion, 347 MacDonough Ave., Bklyn**

EXHIBITIONS

**Schomburg Center for Research
in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Blvd.
(135th St.), NY, 212.491.2200**
Arturo A. Schomburg: Race Man
An exhibition presenting a selection of
objects from Schomburg's original col-
lection which illustrate the ways in
which he challenged the myth of black
racial inferiority and documented the
place and role of African peoples in the
making of world civilization

- o **Opening January 24, 1996**
The Schomburg Legacy:
Documenting the Global Black
Experience for the 21st Century

**N.Y. Historical Society, 2 West 77th
Street at CPW, NY, 212.873.3400.**
Continuing through Dec. 31, 1995 --
Treasury of the Past. Two hundred
years of American history throughout
the permanent collections of the
Historical Society

- o **Sat., Nov. 18, 11:00AM**
Changing Faces of New York.
See how New York has changed
over the last 200 years!
- o **Sat., Dec. 2, 11:00AM**
**From Here to There: Boats,
Bikes and Subway Trains.**
Journey through time to find
out how people traveled in the
old days

Museum of the City of New York:
1220 Fifth Ave., NY, 212.534.1672
o **Sat., Nov. 11, 1-5PM**

Growing Up in East Harlem:
The Italian, Jewish, Latino, and
African-American Experience

- o **Sat., Nov. 18, 2-4PM, Opening
Celebration, Cookie's Harlem!**
Come to the opening of this fasci-
nating photographic and multi-
media exhibition, featuring selec-
tions from the picture collection of
Charles "Cookie" Cook (1917-
1991), celebrated tap dancer and
musical historian

- o **Sat., Dec. 9, 9:30AM-1:00PM**
From New York Kilns
Ceramics made in New York in the
18th and 19th centuries. Advance
registration required: \$25.00



Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY.
718.681.6000.

**Africa, the New World, Blues and
the Crossroads --** Interpreted by artist
Renee Stout. An exploration of the dis-
tinctive artistic and spiritual links
between African and New World Black
culture-ancestral worship, Yoruba
deities, blues music and folk healing

Studio Museum of Harlem,
144 W. 125th St., NY., 212.534.1672
Now through Dec. 31.
Fall exhibition schedule includes the
artwork of **Haitian artist Jean-Michel
Basquiat.** His Blue Ribbon Paintings
combine techniques of silk screening
and direct painting

- o **Nov. 18 Art Talks for Children**
From the City Streets: Graffiti & Art
Call for a list of upcoming events

Clinton Hill Simply Art Gallery
583 Myrtle Ave. (near Classon)
Bklyn., NY 718.857.0074

The upcoming exhibition schedule
includes Mixed Media Art by Jide Ojo -
- Jan 2 thru Feb. 4; The Collage Work
of Jimmy James Greene -- Feb. 6 thru
Mar. 10th and Oil on Paper -- the work
of Danny Simmons featured Mar. 12
thru April 14. **Call for complete
schedule**

UPCOMING CONCERTS

- World Music Institute:**
49 W. 27th St., NY. 212.545.7536
- o **Sat., Dec. 9, 8PM,**
John Coltrane's Meditation
Suite, David Liebman Group and
Friends, Symphony Space,
95th St. & Bway, \$16.00
 - o **Sat., Jan. 27, 8PM**
Music and Dance of Cuba,
Conjunto Afro-Cubano,
Symphony Space,
95th St. & Broadway, \$16.00
 - o **Fri., Feb. 23 & Sat. Feb. 24, 8PM**
Bale Folclorico de Bahia, Brazil
City Center, 131 W. 55th St, \$30 &
\$40. Experience the power of
Capoeira, Maculele, Samba and
Carnival Dance!
 - o **Sat., Feb. 3, 8pm**
Songs and Dances of Zimbabwe
Black Umfolosi
An evening of transforming music
from South Africa. Accompanied
by Zulu and Shona dances

LECTURES AND FORUMS

- Free Your Mind!**
Lectures at St. James Presbyterian
Church, 141 St. Nicholas Ave., NY
Donations \$4. 212.368.7353
- o **Nov. 11, 4PM Examining
the Educational Process
for African Progress -**

LECTURES/FORUMS CONT.

The Past, Present and our African Community Future
by Brother Edwin Nichols,
African industrial psychologist
and philosopher

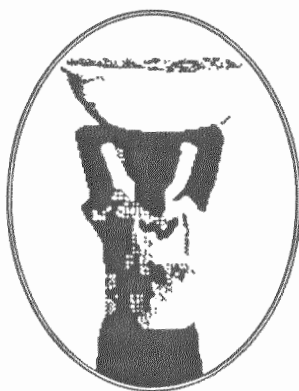
o Nov. 18, 4PM

The Spiritual Healing of our African Race, Sister Marimba Ani (Dona Richards), author of "Yurugu"

o Nov. 25, 4PM

The Restoration of the African Spiritual Personality - - A Blueprint for revolutionary Pan Africanism, Brother James Small, African community educator

NY Historical Society,
2 West 77th St., CPW,
NYC., 212.873.3400,
Sat., Dec. 2, 1:00PM
Anonymous People of Distinction



Museum Educator, Cynthia Copeland, explores 200 years of the African-American struggle for freedom, including the efforts of Dred Scott and Harriet Wilson

HISTORY TOURS

Joyce Gold History

Tours of NY 212.242.5762

o Sat., Nov. 25, 12 Noon (3 hours)

The Colonial Settlers of Wall St.
Walk the 350 year old streets in the

heart of the Financial District.
Meet at Trinity Church, Bway
and Wall Streets. Call for details.

o Sat., Nov. 18, 10:30AM (2 hours)

From Landfill to Landscape:
Battery Park City and The World
Financial Center. Learn about Man-
hattan's newest waterfront prome-
nade. Meet at the Greenhouse Cafe
at the NY Vista Hotel for a compli-
mentary cup of coffee

**Reclaim The Memories:
Black History Tours
of Old NY**

914.966.1246

Conducts eight Manhattan Walking
Tours which highlight the African
American presence in NYC during the
17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Call for
schedule and rates for groups and in-
dividuals through Dec. 1995.

CLASSES

TAI CHI CHAU'N for health and body
spirit. Classes are on Sundays, 10AM
-1PM. Instructor Master Derrick Trent.
Call 718.978.4104 for registration

The YWCA of Brooklyn,
30 Third Ave., 4th floor near
Atlantic Ave., Bklyn, NY
718.693.9113

African Dance, Drumming and Yoga
for adults and children! Saturdays and
Sundays. Call for full schedule.

SPECIAL EVENTS

**Schomburg Ctr. for Research in
Black Culture**, 515 Malcolm X Blvd.
(135th St.) NY., 212.491.2200, Sun.,
Nov. 19, 4:30 pm, **A Tribute to James
Weldon Johnson**. Performances by
Bobby Short and Charles Dumas.
Langston Hughes Auditorium.

o Thurs., Dec. 7, 7PM

The Middle Passage
Dialogue with Dr. John Henrick
Clarke and Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan



Timelines —

1. Who is believed to be the first African American women in the U.S. to receive full accreditation as a lawyer?
2. Who was the first African American woman to lecture publicly?
3. In which city was Frederick Douglass attacked with stones and rotten eggs?
4. How many French soldiers died when Napoleon tried to reintroduce slavery in Haiti?
5. Name the African American who invented the gas inhalator in 1912

Answers

1. Charlotte Ray graduated from Howard University Law School in 1872
2. Maria Stewart
3. In Philadelphia on Lombard Street
4. An estimated 50,000 soldiers were killed by Haitian leaders Dessalines, Christophe and an epidemic of Yellow Fever.
5. Garrett L. Morgan

Source: Blackfax Calendar
R. Edward Lee, Publisher
and Editor in Chief.
Call: 718.378.3878 for info



African Burial Ground Update

o AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND VOLUNTEERS

On Saturday, October 28th, OPEI offered another exciting opportunity for people to be initiated as volunteers and advocates for the African Burial Ground Project. Look for the next volunteer training session in 1996 or **call the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground at 212.432.5707 for schedule.**

o OPEI's Fall Educators Symposium

November 4, 1995 marks the second anniversary of the transferral of the ancestral remains to Howard University in Washington, DC, for analysis. At the OPEI, 6 World Trade Center, the three documentary films on the African Burial Ground will be shown and a panel discussion on The African Burial Ground Revisited will take place in the afternoon. Invited panelists include NYC Council Members Helen Marshall, Wendell Foster and African Burial Ground advocates and supporters Elombe Brath, Richard Brown, Verna Francis, Peggy King Jorde, Debbie Officer, Professor Joe Jackson and others. At 12 noon there will be a prayer service at the African Burial Ground site led by members of the N.Y. clergy. There will be tours of the Foley Square Laboratory and a tour of the African Burial Ground site will be conducted by OPEI director, Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson. Special musical guests Alpha & Omega and Gifted Hands will be on hand to help us commemorate this occasion. Scholars, teachers, students and all other interested individuals are invited to come and participate in this informative event. Space is limited so RSVP today! **212.432.5707**

* * *

- o **Press Conference for Commemorative Stamp Campaign.** On Thursday, Nov. 16, 1995 at 10am, N.Y. Senator David Paterson will hold a press conference at City Hall to announce his intention to personally deliver petitions containing over 100,000 signatures to Postmaster General Marvin Runyon in Washington, DC. The signatures represent national and international support for a stamp that would honor the New York African Burial Ground. An earlier petition for the stamp was rejected by the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee

o New York's African Burial Ground: An African Diasporic Legacy

A Symposium sponsored by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) will be held on Nov. 17th and 18th in Washington, DC at the Washington Hilton and Towers, 1919 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Speakers and topics will include an overview of the African Burial Ground Project and the activist role of the descendant community. Passes to attend are available at OPEI.

- o **OPEI OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ON SATURDAY DECEMBER 9.** From 10:00 am to 4:00 pm OPEI will offer slide presentations, film viewing, a question and answer session and more.

o Related Matters...

The Smithsonian Runner, a newsletter about Native American activities at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, reports that The Repatriation Office of the National Museum of Natural History recently returned the remains of six Pawnee scouts to the Pawnee Nation for traditional burial. After serving in the U.S. Army the men were killed by a detached troop of the 10th U.S. Cavalry in Mulberry Creek, Kansas in 1869. The remains, along with others, had been transferred from the Army Medical Museum and held at the Smithsonian since the turn of the century.

In a private ceremony held at Fort McNair in Washington, DC, representatives of the Pawnee nation accompanied the remains to Genoa, Nebraska. There the deceased received military honors along with traditional Pawnee burial rites before being buried in a public cemetery in June. Human remains are being returned under the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989 (public law 101-185). In compliance with this act the National Museum of Natural History Repatriation Office notified all potentially affiliated tribes that the cited remains were culturally identified.



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COMMUNITY VOICES



Compiled by Donna Harden Cole

In keeping with the 1992 Congressional ruling that the African Burial Ground site should have an appropriate structure, honoring the men, women and children buried there, we asked several of our readers what they thought would be a fitting memorial?

DEBBIE OFFICER

Writer/Journalist

Amsterdam News & The Beacon

I feel that whatever the memorial site will be, it should face the direction in which they were buried, towards the east. Whoever is looking into doing this memorial should not only face the memorial toward the direction of the burials, but it should tell their story, their experiences in New Amsterdam/New York. They should look for a motif that is common in all African cultures notwithstanding the geographical location of a particular country because we do not know their places of birth in Africa.

NANA KOJO TUFFOUR

Nkosohene (Chief of Development) of Ampenyi
Ghana, West Africa

For years I have had the plans and sketches for a memorial to the ancestors who perished in the middle passage. It shows a group of Africans emerging in sequence from the ocean. I believe that something more than a sculpture or statue must be done to honor the ancestors of the African Burial Ground. We should have ongoing educational programs that help us to understand fully the culture of our ancestors. The contributions that Africans have made and the influence that Africans have had in world civilizations has been, and still is, significant.

BARBARA FENTON

"Tell Me Something Good"
Cable Television Talk Show

I can think of four ways to honor these great individuals. First, I would like to see a statue erected to commemorate the existence of these individuals. A statue would represent permanence of this commemoration. The subject could be centered around the many traditions of the African family. Secondly, an inscription should be placed close to this sacred ground or upon the building. The inscription would be representative of the many voices of those who came to this city

before us. Thirdly, I would also commend the initiation of a yearly festival for all to enjoy. This could be a celebration which would include people dressing in period clothing, revisiting our history, sharing our traditions. Finally, the establishment of a museum to house the artifacts and some of the remains would again be representative of a permanent exhibition for all to see and write about now and in the future.

LENORA PETERSON

Administrator, Department of Africana Studies
Brooklyn College

There are so many ideas that come to mind, but, what touched my spirit was the need to have a wall with a series of collages that embrace the plight of the African American family. The collages should depict the economic suffering felt by the African American family in which many died and were buried in unmarked graves in New York City. There should be a collection of faces coming out of the graves that express the various emotional stages of hunger, pain, anger, and disbelief. Within the context of the collage is a painting of a child who lost his boyhood innocence due to the social conditions of a hostile environment; yet, an ancestor reaches out to guide this young man through the rites of passage.

Another section should be a painting of an African mother nurturing her children, while her husband protects the family from the illness of American society. The final section should be devoted to the aspirations and dreams of the African American family. The African Burial Ground must be a remembrance to everyone of how we continue to triumph over all obstacles and tribulations.

RONALD B. HARDEN

African Burial Ground Project Volunteer

An obelisk should be erected as a monument to the ancestors. This would be an appropriate way to honor these individuals and to preserve a portion of our history. An inscription indicating the known boundaries of the African Burial Ground should be noted to inform all those who visit the area that great buildings like City Hall also sits on top of these burials. There should be faces of children, woman and men painted on or sculpted into the obelisk to represent those who are interred in the African Burial Ground. The faces should be expressive and representative of their experiences during enslavement in America. The skeletal remains should be depicted at the base of this monument as a reminder from whence we came. Just as the phoenix rises from the ashes, the African in America and in the African diaspora have and will continue to rise from the struggle of our ancestors: our mothers and our fathers, thanks be to God.

FOLEY SQUARE LABORATORY REPORT

TEXTILES RECOVERED FROM THE FIVE POINTS SITE

Cheryl J. LaRoche

Hundreds of cloth fragments have been recovered from the "Courthouse Archaeological Site" (See Fall Update, Issue 5, 1994) and are presently being conserved and catalogued at the Foley Square Lab. This is the first site in New York where large quantities of textiles have survived in an archaeological context.

The recovery of archaeological textiles is generally poor for northeastern urban sites because high rainfall combined with soil conditions reduces the rate of survival. The fragile nature of cloth makes it particularly vulnerable to biological attack. Despite these facts, whole pieces of uncut cloth were excavated. Packs of pins, tailors' thimbles, seam binding and bias tape were among the items also recovered.

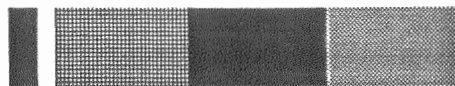
Because textiles are so rarely represented among archaeological collections, the cloth from Five Points provides an opportunity to study a wide range of 19th century woolen textiles, textile technology and the beginnings of the garment industry in New York. Additionally, textiles associated with everyday use or daily wear are often not curated or displayed. The Ellis Island collection is a notable exception but that clothing represents a later time period, beginning in the 1890s.

Conservation cleaning techniques have allowed analysis of manufacturing detail. Much of the soil embedded in the textiles has been removed. The microscope has been used to analyze fibers and reveal the complex weave patterns. Although more than 90% of the fragments recovered have been wool twill, several variations of that weave pattern have been identified. The textile experts from the Cooper-Hewitt, Fashion Institute of Technology and St. John the Divine as well as private conservators who have

examined the collection have been surprised by the technological sophistication represented by the range and complexity of the weaves. Additionally, the deteriorated condition of many of the fragments makes identification of weave structure difficult. The recovery of a large number of textiles is indicative of the commercial nature of portions of the Courthouse Block.

The textiles recovered from Five Points speak to four different industries: the weaving industry which produced the textiles; the garment industry which transformed the textiles into clothing; the second-hand clothing industry and the wool recycling industry.

The textile industry requires space, large machinery and the waterpower necessary for operation. The lack of available waterpower prevented New York from becoming a contender in the textile industry, like Philadelphia to the west and Lowell, Mass., to the north-east.



The Port of New York, however, can be seen as the epicenter of commercial trade throughout the nineteenth century in the United States. The garment industry flourished by offering bolts of imported silks, linens, and other textiles, accessories and dyes. The Port was one of the factors that sustained New York at the forefront of the industry.

From the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution had been fueled by the textile industry. (Even the invention of the computer was an outgrowth of the Jacquard loom technology). The garment industry was emerging during this time period. The mass production of ready-to-wear garments transformed the industry from a home based enterprise to a commercial based industry. Traditionally, family garments had been hand sewn by women laboring at

home (Stein 1977:3). The invention of the sewing machine, although it did not have an immediate impact when it was first introduced in 1846, contributed to a transformation from custom made clothing to ready-to-wear garments.

Many of the cloth pieces recovered from Five Points are one-of-a-kind and are not representative of mass cuttings of bolts of cloth which would be associated with tailors or dressmakers who would have sewn the clothes. Single occurrence of textiles would also not be indicative of cutters whose exclusive job would have been to cut the cloth into pattern pieces for later construction also leaving many scraps of the same fabric as remainders.

Labor became compartmentalized during this time period. Piecework replaced seamstresses with stitchers and tailors with cutters. While this segmentation of labor further transformed the industry by allowing stitchers to work at home, the "sweatshop" also emerged. It was a competitive and chaotic industry with a dispersed labor force always on the edge of hunger (Stein 1977: xv). Unlike other areas of the Northeast, New York City's garment industry grew, based not on mechanization, but on an unending supply of cheap labor (Wilentz, 1984).

As with African Americans before them, Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians entered the garment industry in the hopes of using the industry as a "stepping stone" from poverty to non-poverty status (Laurentz 1980). Unlike their European counterparts, however, they were not able to move up within the garment industry or out of it altogether to more lucrative work. Often, it was the immigrants from Europe who were able to capitalize on the oppression of blacks. (Laurentz 1980)

African Americans and females were highly exploited and discriminated against within the garment industry.

(cont. on page 19)

THE CHRYSTIE STREET CEMETERY

Emilyn L. Brown

In October of 1794 New York's Common Council received "A Petition from sundry black Men (Africans)...praying the Aid of this Board in purchasing a Piece of Ground for the interment of their dead." In many ways the request mirrored the city's social, economic and political divisions in the decades following the Revolutionary War. A critical example, and one of the underlying causes for closure of the Broadway Block African Burial Ground, was the city's rapid development. In the years leading up to the petition and immediately following, division and sale of the Van Borsum land patent, which included the cemetery, signalled its eminent closure. Overcrowded conditions, caused by nearly a century of use and numerous fatalities from the city's bouts with yellow fever, was a contributing factor as well (M.C.C., II:112; Liber Deeds 195).

For African Americans, the petition stood as counterpoint to the troubled history of the cemetery; the ultimate symbol of the community's spiritual and cultural values. Difficulties associated with site seem to have reached a peak in 1788, when activities of medical students at New York Hospital, formerly located on Broadway and Duane Streets, drew sharp protest from a group identifying themselves as "free Negroes and Slaves in the City of New York:"

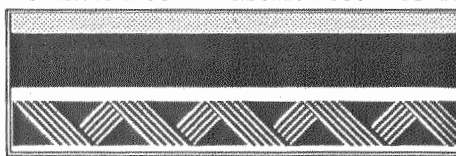
...it hath lately been the constant practice of a number of young gentlemen in this city who call themselves students of Physick, to repair to the Burying Ground assigned for the use of your Petitioners and under cover of the night and in the most wanton sallies of excess, to dig up the bodies of the deceased friends and Relatives of your Petitioners, carry them away and without respect to age, or sex, mangle their flesh out of a wanton curiosity and then expose it to beasts & birds...

(Duffy 1968; Stokes I: 374;
Common Council Papers 1788)

Although the petitioners urged the hospital board to take measures "to prevent similar abuses in the future," continued

raids on various cemeteries in the city eventually touched off a "Doctor's Riot" which may have included African Americans. Unsigned and unendorsed by the Common Council, the petition may have been overlooked in the chaotic state of city affairs after the war, or silenced by officials who viewed African American freedom—gained through military involvement with British and American forces, abandonment by former Loyalists and manumission—as marginal.

Given the volatile mood of a city which excluded its African American population from policies that impacted their lives, how did the Chrystie Street petition succeed? Part of the answer lies in the organizing principles used by Richard Allen and Abasalom Jones between 1784 and 1794. Their petition for a burial plot in Philadelphia's Potters Field, operation of a mutual aid society, and more specifically, Abasalom Jones' installation as rector of St. Thomas, an Episcopal church, provided a successful model (Litwack 1961). In addition, the alliances freedmen and women formed with abolition societies in



the north led to greater educational opportunities. In turn, these opportunities were channeled into anti-slavery petitions and distribution of material that promoted the abolishment of slavery. For the most part however, the petition's real success was intricately linked to Trinity Church, one of the largest landowners in the city.

The small group of men who brought the petition appear to have been long time parishioners at Trinity, and by general consensus, the founding members of St. Philips Church. Possibly the descendants of enslaved Africans who received catechism under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, they continued to worship at Trinity until 1809. At least two versions of St. Philips history make reference to the discontent of this group and Trinity's attempt to make amends through the purchase of a small cemetery plot. (Da Costa 1889; 1986). Early maps confirm the cemetery's existence, bordered by Church, Reade,

Duane and Chapel Streets (West Broadway). It may have been in use as early as 1773 (Bancker Plans NYPL; Stokes V:1387). It remains unclear however, why Trinity's African American parishioners failed to organize around the burial plot, or if the offer was rescinded for other reasons. Reportedly, this site later became part of a land endowment to St. Mark's Church (Memorial 1889).

Several of New York's prominent officials, including James Duane, were parishioners at Trinity and were also involved in the Manumission Society. Located within the former boundaries of James de Lancey's Bowery estate, the choice of Chrystie Street (formerly known as First Street) appears to have served a dual purpose. A staunch opponent of the Revolution, James de Lancey governed New York from 1753 to 1760 and, according to his son Edward, returned to England "to avoid bearing arms against Americans." Under the "Act for the speedy sale of the Confiscated and Forfeited Estates" that went into effect after the war, James Duane as Mayor, ordered the site to be parceled out and sold, thereby dismantling one of the city's remaining symbols of Loyalist wealth and power. In the description that follows, Edward de Lancey offers details of the site that provide a rare perspective of the lower east side:

The Mansion House...with extensive grounds and a drive leading to it under large trees, fronted the Bowery, and stood back nearly on the line of First Street...between de Lancey and Rivington Streets. It was occupied as a hospital for the American troops in the summer of 1776, and...during the war, by the British troops for the same purpose. On First Street stood Mr. de Lancey's running stable and in Second Street a paddock for the horses and near it a private track to train them. Orchard Street is so named from the large orchards on that part of the farm...(Jones:1879)

The abandoned house remained standing until April 7, 1795, two months prior to the transfer of deed to the petitioners.

In June of 1795 the Chrystie Street property was purchased for £450 by "the Corporation of the City, the Corporation of Trinity Church, divers well disposed individuals, and the Petitioners." It's likely that other African burial grounds existed in the

city, but the Chrystie Street cemetery's legal status and surviving documentation, strengthens its recognition as New York's second African Burial Ground. In the formally worded Resolution that followed transfer of the deed, the identity and goals of the petitioners were presented:

...your Petitioners are free people of color, residing in the City of New York — that they have lately associated, under the name of the African Society, for the laudable purpose of improving their morals, by promoting a spirit of brotherly love, and a strict regard for the laws of the State, and also with intent to procure a place for the erection of a building for divine worship and the interment of people of color...And that as your Petitioners are not, at present, able to become Incorporated as a religious Society, agreeably to the law of the State, they are under the necessity, from the peculiarity of their situation, to request the further humane assistance of the Corporation. Your Petitioners do therefore, respectfully solicit, that the Corporation will be pleased to authorize six of your Petitioners Isaac Fortune, William Hutson, Abraham Dickenson, John Hall, James Parker, and Peter Francis [as] Managers of the Business of said Association or Society to improve and use the said land, for the purposes here in before mentioned, and to demand, sue for, receive and enjoy the fees and Privileges usually taken and had by the Proprietors of burial Grounds in said City....And that whenever an Incorporation can be effected, agreeably to law, the said Land may be conveyed to the Trustees for the purposes aforesaid
(M.C.C., II: 137, 159, 161)

For the first time in the city's history, African Americans operated from a distinct managerial vantage point. Although difficult to assess the cultural impact this may have had on burials rites, a random sample taken from the first fifteen years of the cemetery's existence provide an enduring portrait of hardships suffered in 19th century African American life.

For example, out of thirty death records examined, the majority were former New Yorkers. However, St. Croix, Curacao, the West Indies, and Africa were also given as places of origin. The age of the burial population ranged from newborn to 98 years, with a high child mortality rate. Evidence of poverty or poor living conditions contributed to a wide range of illnesses and occasionally misdiagnosis such as "teething," as was the case of one year old Nancy Bostwick. More commonly, infantile flux, whooping

cough, rickets, hives, and convulsions claimed the lives of children. Causes of death for adults included consumption, fevers, severe colds and in one case, insanity. "Sudden death," was attributed to several adult Black males including thirty year old Cuffee, Henry Brown, and John Battert a forty year old man from Africa. Others originating from Africa included Mary Brown, who died from dropsy, Bearshaba (sic), who died from a cold and Claus Zigama Brown who was ninety-eight years old when he died in 1814. (Manhattan Death Libers Vol. 1, 2, 3 — 1795-1820).

NEW-YORK DAILY TRIBUNE
Wed., Mar. 24, 1853... Price two cents

*** Notice- The Vestry of St. Philips Church having made arrangements for removing the bodies deposited in their burial ground in Chrystie-St to Cypress Hills Cemetery give notice to those who have friends deposited there and wish to take charge of them, that by making application at the Ground, and pointing out the spot, the bodies will be delivered to them free of charge...**

Death records indicate that Lewis Francis, an original petitioner for the cemetery, handled the majority of burials at Chrystie Street. But African Americans were also being buried in the city's Potters Field in Greenwich Village from 1797 to 1825, largely the result of indigence, intemperance, suicide, or lack of family ties, like Bett, "a black girl" who died at the state prison of consumption. Sometime after 1801, African Americans were buried in the vault of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church where Samuel Day was caretaker, although this may have been limited to members.

After 1807 AMEZ's vault was closed by order of the city's Board of Health who cited offensive conditions caused by overcrowding. Unlike the African Society, AMEZ's appeal to the city for a burial site resulted in their being given a portion of Potters Field. Their status as an independent and activist

church, as well the city's early motions to control interments within city limits, may have held equal weight in the decision.

Surviving records of early African American societies, created in part to avoid the anonymity of Potters Field, also provide a glimpse as to how 19th century African American activists created formal and informal organizations. For instance on December 2, 1807 at a "Meeting of Africans" held at the African Free School on Cliff Street, discussions concerning abolishment of the slave trade and a celebration commemorating the event, led to the formation of a "Committee of Twelve." That committee included African Society member Isaac Fortune and the Williams family, father and son (Gilje: 1992). Peter Williams, Sr. had been instrumental in the founding of AMEZ Church (see "African American Beginnings" this issue), and with his son, founded the African Mutual Relief Society in 1808. Peter Williams, Jr., a graduate of the African Free School, became a life long abolitionist whose religious calling eventually unified the goals of the African Society to organize a church.

Instrumental in guiding young Williams toward ordination as the first African American Episcopalian deacon in New York, Rev. Henry Hobart was also responsible for organizing Trinity's Black parishioners as the African Catechetical Society. St. Philips was organized in accordance with the doctrines of Protestant Episcopal ethics, with land for its structure provided by George Lorillard, a member of the wealthy tobacco family. Financially backed by Trinity Church, the 60 year lease specified that the Centre Street property would eventually revert to the Vestry of St. Philips; a clause that allowed the church to build up considerable equity in the years that followed.

Through the labor of its growing congregation, the church celebrated its opening in 1819. But the year proved memorable in other respects as well, as yellow fever resurfaced after an absence of many years. Based on the panic and wide spread fatalities of earlier epidemics, city officials began to evacuate city residents; a situation that became routine over the next few years. In the summer and fall

(cont. on page 17)



The Children's Corner:

Marie-Alice Devieux

From the first to the eighth grade, Alicia was my best friend. We did absolutely everything together. We sat together in our classes. We talked about the same boys. We shared and kept each other's secrets. One entire weekend we played a game called Othello, while Alicia's mom made us datenut bread with cream cheese. So, with everything going on so well, I don't remember what the big fight we later had was about. But I do remember how lonely I was the week we weren't speaking to each other. And what a horrible week it was! Not passing notes to each other in class. Not teasing Donald Abrams about the strange things (and I do mean strange things) falling out of his desk. No Othello and no datenut bread. During that week it turned out that Alicia was as unhappy as I was. When we finally made up we wanted to do something special so that we would never forget how important best friends are for each other. But what, we thought, could we do?

Since she was always great in art class and could make a lot of cool things, she decided to make us friendship bracelets out of yarn and beads. Since I was always writing songs and stories, I made up the words to a friendship poem. We decided that every year at the same time, at the beginning of every summer we would, wherever we were, even if we were far away from each other, we would take out our friendship bracelets and whisper the words of the friendship poem. We understood how important it is to say you're sorry if you did something wrong. It would make us remember how important we were to each other and that we should never let a silly fight come between us again. What Alicia and I had created together was our own little ritual. And a ritual is a kind of ceremony.

Maybe you were baptized as a Christian — that is a type of important ceremony or ritual. Maybe you and your family ate turkey at Thanksgiving and said prayers before eating — that's a ritual. Maybe you

and your family celebrated Kwaanza and made presents for each other—that's a ritual too. The list of rituals is almost endless. The one thing about all rituals is that they are important because they help you to remember the things which are very important in your life -- especially family.

Now, most of the time we think of family as maybe mom and dad, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins. But there are members of our families who are not in our immediate families and are sometimes far away. These are people in the **diaspora**. People who at one time may have been related to your great, great, great grandparents are your **ancestors**. People in a **diaspora** have **ancestors** who all come from the same original place, but are scattered around the world. Many people in the African diaspora live in the United States, in states like New York or Virginia. Or in countries of the Caribbean, like Jamaica or the Dominican Republic. Some people of the African diaspora live in England or Germany. And still more live in South America in places like Brazil or Surinam. A few months ago, a very special ritual or ceremony happened at the historic landmark **African Burial Ground** in New York City. Important, because it had a lot to do with saying you're sorry, and remembering the importance of our families, our ancestors, and people in the African diaspora.

But before I tell you about that important ritual, I want you to use your imagination for a moment. Imagine that you live in an African country today. Maybe you live in **Ghana** and are elected **chief** of your village. Being a chief is like being the mayor of your town. You would help make decisions about how certain things are done or how certain laws are made. You would participate in rituals too. Well, as you may know a long time ago there were some people who wanted to make some African people slaves. Sometimes the way they managed to kidnap these Africans from their families was to pay someone to help them. Sometimes, very sadly, that person may have been the chief, the mayor of a village. The people taken from their families would never see them again. These people later became a part of the African diaspora. They would later live in the United States, the Caribbean, South America and other places.

Now, almost five hundred years later, a new group of African chiefs recognize the mistakes of past chiefs. These new chiefs decided that it was time to **atone**, to say they were sorry, for what other chiefs had once done. The new chiefs are from Ghana, a country in Africa, and call what they are doing **Fihankra**.

The chiefs traveled to the United States on a tour of Fihankra to visit several cities. They said prayers, did rituals, and hoped that our families and our ancestors in the African diaspora would forgive them for what a few chiefs had once done. One of the places they visited was the African Burial Ground in New York City, a national historic landmark. They believe that our African ancestors are buried there. They prayed that our families would be safe and live together again. This is the meaning of Fihankra. It is a movement of unity. They traveled over 8,000 miles to do these Fihankra rituals. That is how important it is sometimes to say you're sorry. Lucky for Alicia and me, we didn't have to go so far away or have such a serious thing to make up for.

Now that you understand what a ritual is, it's your turn. Are there rituals from your family background? What are they? Maybe you or your parents are from places around the U.S., like South Carolina, Louisiana, or California. Or maybe you are from other countries like Haiti, Ireland, or China. Maybe your family is Native American and you are Mohawk, Chickasaw, or Apache. What are the rituals that children participate in from your culture? Ask questions. Do some research at the library. What things are used in the ritual you describe? Write it all down. Keep me posted.

Now that you have learned a few new words, put your new knowledge to work and find them in this puzzle. Good Luck!

- ritual** -- an important ceremony
- African Burial Ground** -- a national historic landmark site where African ancestors are buried.
- ancestor** -- family who lived a long time ago, like your great grandfather or your great great grandfather
- diaspora** -- people around the world whose ancestors come from the same place
- atone** -- a fancy word for saying your sorry
- chief** -- a person chosen to be the mayor of the village
- Fihankra** -- A movement of unity. African chiefs travelled to the U.S. to do rituals
- Ghana** -- the country in Africa where the chiefs came from

ATTTKBAST
FDEECCCD
RGFHNOKJI
IROTSECNA
COANGROUS
ATSCPPTON
NFIHANKRA
BURINESTR
UINECTORO
ROTFANAKP
ILDNEGEES
ALAAOHBSA
LHPUTNRTI
GHPOTNRD
RORMTIDDA
ONAOHNRNP
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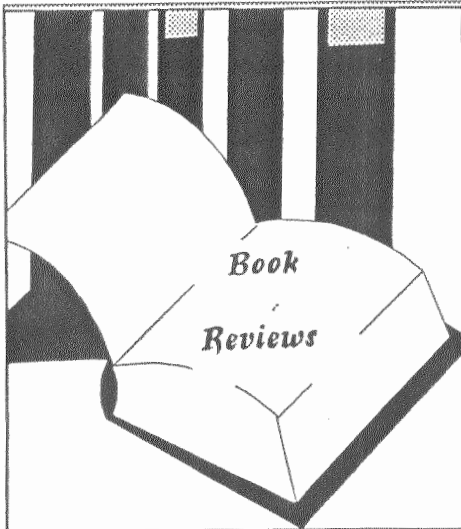
Recommended reading :
The African Holocaust for Beginners
Author: S.E. Anderson
Pub.: Writers and Readers Pub. Inc.
\$ 11.00

XXXX

Are you or your class doing cool things you'd like to tell us about? Any ideas for the Children's Corner? WRITE US!

The Children's Corner
c/o OPEI,
6 World Trade Center, Rm. 239
New York, NY 10048

Tip of the pen to CC!



Book: Conservation Concerns:
A Guide for Collectors
and Curators
Publisher: Smithsonian Institution
Press (1992)
Author: Konstanze Bachmann
Reviewer: Cheryl J. LaRoche

Conservation Concerns is a collection of 22 essays which addresses the primary conservation and preservation concerns of museum professionals and collections managers. The essay topics range from environmental issues such as storage, emergency planning, and temperature and humidity control, to care of works on paper, textiles, photographs and furniture.

While the book is intended for professional use, much of what is contained in the essays is a useful resource for anyone who has papers, photographs, sound recordings, valuables, furniture or heirlooms which require preservation and proper handling. There are passages where the language is technical but generally applicable for most readers. This volume presents factual and technical information in clear terms as opposed to conservation requirements for collections which are often presented in technical language.

The contributors discuss the underlying reasons for many conservation requirements. Ann Brooke Craddock's essay on "Control of Temperature and Humidity in Small Collections," discusses the consequences of fluctuations in temperature and humidity in a clear, concise, informative manner. The need for environmental

controls is understood by most museum professionals and collections managers but the reason for the requirement is not widely understood. In "Principles of Storage," Konstanze Bachmann and Rebecca Anne Rushfield give common sense advice about proper storage conditions which have universal applicability. They discuss climate control, insect infestation and safety and handling. While again, targeted to the museum professional, there is much here that should be common knowledge. The essay on "Emergency Planning" by Mary W. Ballard, however, is definitely geared for museum problems.

Klaus B. Hendriks' essay on "The Preservation and Storage of Sound Recordings" provides the collector or curator with an excellent understanding of the technological and historical background for vinyl recordings, tapes and compact discs. His discussion of the particular storage and handling needs of these types of materials is recommended reading for anyone concerned with the long-term preservation of sound recordings.

Conservation Concerns offers sound advice and addresses the conservation needs of a wide range of materials. This volume should be read by anyone considering the museum field or conservation as a career. The broad range of topics addressed in this primer offers a realistic discussion of a number of the less complicated professional problems and concerns which are encountered.

The "Appendix" is a useful reference tool which contains a list of conservation suppliers delineated by name, address, phone number and products.

Until recently, conservation issues were not widely discussed or recognized outside the profession. Much of the damage to collections which subsequently requires the attention of a conservator is caused by mishandling, improper storage and poor environmental controls, in addition to the natural processes of degradation. This has led the profession to emphasize "passive" or preventative conservation—a "care for it now and avoid damage later" attitude.

Many of the artifacts which comprise col-

lections have lasted hundreds of years. It is the responsibility of collections managers, conservators and collectors to ensure that these materials continue to survive and endure. Conservation Concerns provides the basic information to aid in that process.

Book: National Register of Historic
Places. African American
Historic Places
Author: ed. by Beth Savage,
Publisher: National Parks Service,
U.S. Dept. of the Interior
Reviewer: Sherrill D. Wilson

This invaluable resource is a listing of African American national landmark sites in forty-three states, catalogued from Alabama to Wisconsin, provided by the National Park Service. The book is divided into two sections. Part I provides an overview of African American sites and their cultural and historic contexts provided by historians, anthropologists, preservation advocates, political representatives and others.

Historian James O. Horton, "Social History and the African American Experience," introduces the context for the significance of African American sites and the general policy of exclusion of African Americans from the historical record. "From Place to Place: African American Migration and Historic Sites" by James Grossman, adds to the popular history of the African American migration from the south and west to the north. Archaeologist Theresa Singleton's "The African Legacy Beneath Our Feet," explores the significance and meaning that artifacts recovered from African American archaeological sites provide to the context of African American historic places. African American women's 19th century history is discussed by Carla Peterson in "Lifting As We Climb: African American Women and Social Activism (1800-1920). Of particular interest to New Yorkers is Joan Maynard's "Where Children's Dreams Become Reality: The Society of the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History,"

(Cont. on page 19)

Chrystie St. Cemetery (cont. from page 13)

of 1820, impoverished African Americans living on Bancker Street were hit hard by a form of the fever and the number of dead were apparently more than the Chrystie Street cemetery could handle. Lewis Francis, still proprietor of the cemetery and by then, first church warden of St. Philips, protested to the Council that his own bout with illness left the cemetery in less qualified hands, but the response of the Committee for Public Land and Places was to issue a series of regulations, enforceable by a \$250 fine:

after considering complaints against the African burying ground in Chrystie Street and Potters Field, recommend...that no Corpse, shall be left at any time, without a covering of earth of at least two feet deep, and no grave shall be left from one day to another day, without being entirely filled up with earth. No Corpse, shall be deposited nearer the surface of the ground than four feet. Nor shall any person whose death was occasioned by any contagious (sic), or putrid fever be interred otherwise than in a single grave six feet deep (MCC XI:256, 286-7)

In addition, the search for a new public cemetery was underway, with officials finally settling on the area between 40th and 45th streets and 5th and 6th avenues (M.C.C. XIII:116-18).

Like other churches of the era, St. Philips' continued growth provided educational classes for adults and children, and active participation in the social causes of the day. However, between 1822 and 1825, the church entered into a number of battles with city officials who in safeguarding the public health, proposed a ban on further interments in the city. St. Philips argued for and won continued use of the Chrystie Street Cemetery and by August of 1825 sought legal ownership. They reminded the Council of its obligation to hold the land in trust until they could be incorporated. But the Finance Committee, in turning down their request, offered doubts that St. Philips was affiliated with the original petitioners. Citing the necessity of an act of legislation to convey the land, St.

Philips' battle for ownership of Chrystie Street continued for nearly two years before the error was acknowledged ((M.C.C. XIV:640; M.C.C. XIV: 787; XVI:117, 266, 267).

Ironically in 1853, the year St. Philips received the right to vote in church conventions, the city's continued progress forced the congregation to reach a critical decision concerning the cemetery. Rev. D.D. Da Costa, an Episcopalian minister and church historian, outlined the conditions that led to the destruction of Chrystie Street:

...the growth of the city soon required abandonment of all burial-grounds in that part of the municipality. Besides the cemetery at Chrystie Street was completely full. At this juncture Trinity Church came forward and purchased lots on Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, at a cost of ten thousand dollars, which were made over to St. Philips' Church, by Trinity, who retained a mortgage without interest. Only two bodies were interred here before the authorities prohibited further interments. Next a lot of ground was bought on 105th Street, when a law was then passed prohibiting all burials...on Manhattan Island. This lot of land is...now included in Central Park. The parish then obtained liberty from the city authorities to sell the land on Chrystie Street, which was accordingly disposed of and a cemetery purchased with the proceeds at Cypress Hills, Long Island, whither the remains of the dead were all removed...

In addition to a public notice in the New York Tribune on March 23, 24 and 25, St. Philips' own death records confirm "5000 bodies...interred in Lot 100, Section 11, being remains of dead not recognized. Removed by St. Philips P.E. Church of New York from New York."

Today, in the oldest section of Cypress Hills Cemetery where St. Philips has its burial plot, aging gravestones recall the lives of African Americans whose strength of character led to the establishment of the Chrystie Street Cemetery, a stabilizing force in the community for nearly sixty years. While the growth of the city and its policies toward interment appear to have overturned the 1794 victory, the difficult lessons learned from the African Burial Ground — violated, forgotten and built

upon — led the community of St. Philips to embrace its past and in so doing, preserve its future.

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Fihankra (Cont from page 1)

During the slave trade, African men, women and children were held chained in the dungeons until they were amassed on ships for the gruesome transport across the Atlantic Ocean. Of the 45 dungeons on the west coast of Africa, 36 are located in Ghana, making rites of purification especially significant.

Delegation member Nii Adote Mof-fatt, Chief of the Semepe District, Vice Chairman and founding member of ASSPC shares, "We see [African] Americans who come in and go to the castles and they feel neglected. We look at them as friends and when we talk to some of them, they feel something is missing. They want to know why they have been treated like foreigners or Europeans. And this went on until the day Nana Kwadwo Akpan came to us ...we had a series of meetings...talked seriously and appointed December 9, 1994 as the day to purify the "Fihankra" stool and skin.

The stool and (animal) skin are sacred symbols of divine authority and the repository of the spirit and soul of the people. Chiefs of Southern Ghana use the stool as their symbol, and those of Northern Ghana use the [animal] skin as theirs. The unity of these entities is customarily called "Fihankra.." The concept of "Fihankra" as portrayed by the adinkra symbol, is an enclosed and secured compound house; a symbol of safety, security, and solidarity.

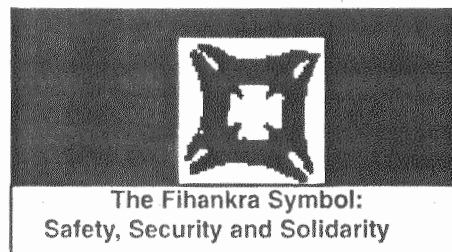
Because of past participation in the slave trade, the stool and skin have been "soiled" and must be "washed." The "washing" or purification of the stool and skin symbolizes spiritual and cultural reconnection with the souls of enslaved ancestors.

The day of the purification ritual, when priests and priestesses dressed in red and black mourning robes, marked the first public event of a nine-day culture and entertainment showcase called "Panafest '94," held in Ghana. A December editorial in Ghana's Daily Graphic newspaper stated that "one of the worthiest features of Panafest '94 has been the bold decision of the National House of Chiefs to

use it as a Festival of Atonement for the role played by some of our chiefs and elders who sold their best men and women into slavery..."

In Phase II, The "Tour of Fihankra, to its Heirs in the Americas," the chiefs set aside July 16 through August 6, 1995 to conduct a seven-city tour of the United States that brought 18 chiefs and attendants primarily from Ghana. Their mission was to explain "the historic significance of the purification of Fihankra and to initiate dialogue on steps to be taken to begin the process of improving the spiritual and material conditions of all African people."

The delegation went to Howard University in Washington, D.C. on August 2, 1995 to visit the Biological Anthropology



Laboratory where Dr. Michael Blakey, scientific director of the project, and his staff are involved in the ongoing analysis of the remains. Like many members of the New York descendant community who have testified to the moving experience of viewing the remains, the Ghanaian chiefs were similarly moved. After observing the remains, delegation leader, Nana Oduro Numapau II, declared "this a day of mourning of African people." In addition, Nii Moffatt expressed "...We have never come across such a thing, we felt so bad. Because these are our great-grandparents. We felt so bad."

After the Washington, D.C. visit, the delegation travelled to New York City where on August 4, 1995, they visited for the first time the African Burial Ground site at 290 Broadway to offer libation, and later went to OPEI's office for a reception and educational presentation. Nii Moffatt, who actually poured the libation, explained that, they "all put on mourning clothes as if we were going to a funeral...everything that happened was very solemn...we felt that these were our people who have been buried here, they could be our sisters, brothers, our great-grandfathers and

great-grandmothers. The libation that I poured was to ask for forgiveness from them, so that they should accept our pleading for forgiveness. We have pleaded with our brothers and sisters who are in the diaspora that they should accept our apology. We pray for forgiveness."

Following the libation ceremony at the African Burial Ground site, the delegation attended a reception held at the Office of Public Education & Interpretation at 6 World Trade Center. The reception was hosted by OPEI director Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson. Several former Federal Steering Committee (FSC) members were in attendance; Mr. Richard Brown, Mrs. Mary Lacy Madison, Ms. Adunni Tabasi, and others. The delegation received an African Burial Ground slide presentation given by OPEI's Office Manager, Steve Harper. The delegation was presented with an original art work by Joan Maynard, executive director of the Weeksville Society. The visit to the OPEI was one that will be long remembered by OPEI staff and guests. "Today," said Dr. Wilson, "we are indeed witnessing history being made."

In the aftermath of the U.S. tour, Phase III of the Fihankra program calls for a "Festival of Fihankra 1995" to occur in Accra, Ghana, December 8-10, 1995. This first annual celebration of the 1994 purification of Fihankra will serve as a tribute and re-dedication to its theme and objectives. Phases IV-VII deal with establishing an operative agenda and acquiring a Fihankra headquarters in Ghana.

Based on an agreement reached with the New York descendant community, current plans are that the ancestral remains will return to New York for re-interment by the year 2000. Already the Ghanaian Chiefs have indicated their willingness to participate fully in the reinterment ceremony at the African Burial Ground site.

The global diasporic effects of the "Tour of Fihankra," are educational and healing. The "purification" should surely begin to break the negative cycle affecting Africa and her people — offering greater possibilities for truly reuniting uniting the divided house.

Foley Square Report (Cont. from page 11)

During the 1840s and 1850s, German and Irish immigrants took over the jobs of porters, dock hands, waiters, barbers and cooks as a job ceiling was imposed on both black men and black women. African Americans were in major conflict with the Irish since they competed for some of the same jobs. "The Irish utilized the racist climate to push blacks out of jobs they already held...Employers would utilize the animosity of these groups towards one another to keep wages low for each" (Laurentz 1980: 88).

A steady trickle of Irish immigrants had begun to arrive in New York City as early as 1820, providing a cheap and plentiful labor source for the rapidly expanding "ready to wear" industry. By 1855, much of the project area was inhabited by almost entirely Irish immigrants. Twelve of the fourteen lots along Orange Street, between Chatham and Cross Street, housed clothiers, tailors, second-hand clothing shops or retail stores during the 1850s, at the height of the Irish migration to the United States (Trow's NY Directories 1854).

Many of the early clothing manufacturers were German Jews who had been peddlers or retail merchants who expanded into clothing manufacturing. "In Germany the Jews had been for many generations the principal dealers in both new and secondhand attire" (Stolberg 1944: 4).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, workers in secondhand shops would have served the clothing and tailoring needs of their poorer clientele by cutting down used clothing to fit the new owner. This process may be one explanation for the quantity and variety of cloth pieces recovered from the site.

By the mid-1880s masses of Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution in Czarist Russia began arriving. These immigrants evolved from peddlers to merchants as they embraced capitalism and its callous attitudes towards labor. As a result of these exploitative attitudes worker resistance to the "sweating conditions" in the garment industry gave rise to the garment workers labor movement and union organization at the end of the century.

Recovery of the textiles from Five Points has led to several avenues of research. From the archaeological perspective, the survival of textiles is a rare occurrence which prompts investigation into soil conditions that fostered survival. Within the conservation profession techniques must be applied which will reclaim the fabric for further investigation and preservation.

From the commercial perspective, the textiles speak to the existence of a thriving garment industry and to the genesis of New York as the center of that industry. From a social perspective, the textiles give rise to a discussion of both ethnic and gender exploitation which was rampant in the industry throughout much of the nineteenth century.

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Book Review (Continued from page 16)

and A. Lynn Bolles' "From the Mystic Years to the Harlem Renaissance: Art and Community in African America.." Powerful memories are evoked by Congressman John Lewis' "The Power of Historic Places: My Civil Rights Experiences." We are reminded that the struggle to restore and recognize the sites that tell the story of the African American experience is an on-going one

by Elizabeth A. Lyon and Frederick C. Williamson in "The Preservation Movement Rediscovered America."

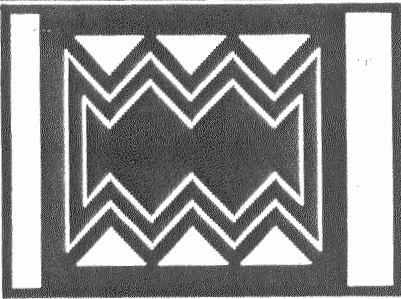
Part II is the actual descriptive listing of the historical places that indicate that people of African descent were indeed there and did point of fact, make significant contributions to America and world history. New York City's entries in this guide include: in Brooklyn, Weeksville Houses in the Hunterfly Road District (Dean and Bergen Streets and the Jackie Robinson House at 1224 Tilden Street. In Manhattan the New York African Burial Ground is listed and assigned the number 93001597 on the register of historic places. Other Manhattan sites include the Apollo Theatre, the Will Marion Cook House, the Dunbar Apartments, the Duke Ellington House, the Matthew Henson residence, Langston Hughes House, Minton's Playhouse, Florence Mills House, the Amsterdam News Building, Schomburg Research Center and others. There is also a listing for Queens, Staten Island and Upstate New York.

FOR FURTHER READING:

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In The Winter Issue of Update

- o Howard University Lab Report
- o African American Beginnings Pt. 5
- o African Burial Ground Update



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